

# MENNONITE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

Published quarterly by the Historical Committee of Mennonite General Conference at Scottdale, Pennsylvania, and distributed to the members of Mennonite Historical Association. **Editors:** John C. Wenger and Melvin Gingerich. **Associate Editors:** H. S. Bender, H. A. Brunk, J. C. Clemens, S. F. Coffman, Paul Erb, J. C. Fretz, Ira D. Landis, C. Z. Mast, J. B. Smith, and S. S. Wenger. Dues for regular membership (one dollar per year) or for sustaining membership (five dollars or more annually) may be sent to the treasurer of the Association, Ira D. Landis, Route 3, Lititz, Pennsylvania. Articles and news items may be addressed to either editor at Goshen, Indiana. **Office Editor:** Paul Erb.

Vol. IX

OCTOBER, 1948

No. 4

## The Largest Ordination Class in Pennsylvania Mennonite History

IRA D. LANDIS

The beautiful Hammer Creek flows from the Lebanon Hills, northwest of Brickerville for eight miles before it enters the Cocalico. The Hammer Creek area of Warwick Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, was settled by Mennonites who overflowed from the Pequea and Earl settlements following 1722. By 1770 forty per cent of the land was cleared for agriculture and mills were built, giving the agricultural-religious fabric for a happy, prosperous community.

Of their first ordinations we have no record but we can piece together most of their ordinations since 1889. Since the 1889 ordination class was the largest in Pennsylvania Mennonite history, we would notice its history as well as its personnel.

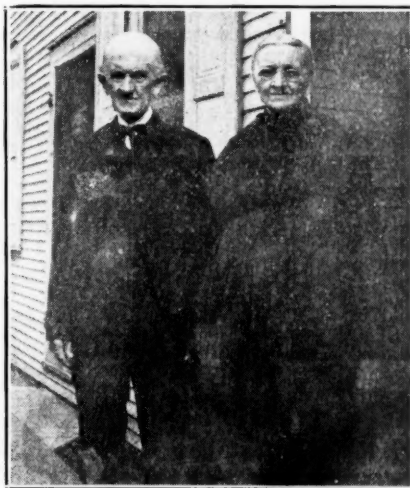
Bishop Christ Bomberger II (1818-1898) after December 1887 did not serve in his office. Christian Risser and John R. Hess were the only ministers serving the large district of Hess, Hammer Creek, Indiantown and Mellinger at Schoeneck. The votes were to be taken at the three main houses. The Bishop Board was headed by that venerable patriarch Jacob N. Brubacher, and included Martin Rutt, Isaac Eby, Jonas Martin, Amos Shenk, Daniel Shank, William Auker and Isaac Gingerich. Every bishop that came in encouraged the brotherhood at each house to vote and vote they did. The class of twenty-two were all farmers but one, averaging thirty-seven with an age range of 22 to 61. The class as seated according to seniority follows:

Jonas Bucher (1828-1904), married to Anna Bollinger, lived east of Clay where his grandson Elmer Bucher now farms. The family was blessed with seventeen children, including Preacher John B. Sixteen years before, he had been ordained Deacon for the Hammer Creek-Indiantown District. They retired along the Pike nearer Clay in the nineties. Here he manufactured brooms. He served on a number of Deacon Committees including the one investigating the affairs that led to the Martinite division. He accumulated some records, including this report, that are still extant. He retired as Deacon in 1896 and was succeeded by Benjamin F., son of Preacher

John R. Hess. He passed on September 19, 1904 at 76. The burial was at Hammer Creek. 9-2 18-32

Benjamin B. Leaman of Lititz (1836-1922) who was reared in East Lampeter Township and married to Mary Brubaker, had just started a corner grocery store in Warwick. He was the father of Nathaniel and brother of Deacon David. His first wife died in 1891. He later married Lydia Moseman, who still survives. He continued the grocery business throughout his life and his son Benjamin, Jr., succeeded him. He is buried at Hess. 3-2 22-27

Benjamin Wikerd (1840-1919), married to Martha Huber, had just moved to the farm southwest of Kissel Hill, where



*Jonas Hess and wife. He was chosen by lot out of a class of 22 in 1889, ordained, and served the Hess-Indiantown District 30 years.*

Paul, his grandson, now lives. He retired in Lititz, but died in East Petersburg. He is buried at the latter place. Here his children are all serving the Lord. 3-0 2-0

Jonas H. Hess (b. Mar. 13, 1841; d. Mar. 30, 1919) and his wife Annie Franck (1843-1929) started farming on the home place, near Rome, on the original Hess Tract which Jacob his ancestor received in 1735 from the Penns. Here they reared their family of Lizzie—wife of Henry Bucher of Warwick Township, Catharine—wife of Amos Musser of Salunga, Christian of this class, Fanny—wife of David Betzner of Kitchener, Canada, Henry F. of the home place, now Lititz, who supplied valuable infor-

(Continued on page 2)

## A Brief Account of the Origin of the Church of God in Christ (Mennonite) of Manitoba, Canada

JOHANN B. TOEWS

Brother Toews held the position of bishop in the Kleine Gemeinde church prior to the large emigration in 1874-75 from Russia to a point about twenty-five miles southeast of Winnipeg, Manitoba, where several congregations of the Kleine Gemeinde were established.

In his anxiety and concern for the eternal welfare of his soul, Brother Toews read much and searched the Holy Scriptures, and with untiring efforts he endeavored to trace the origin of the true church of God, in the writings of the apostles, the martyrs, Menno Simons, and others. Brother Toews put forth earnest efforts in an attempt to find the true origin of the church that was built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone. Not being at ease about the matter, with his concern for the church, he did not find his way open to carry on the responsibilities of his position in the Kleine Gemeinde under existing conditions.

Some time after our arrival in America (Canada), Brother Toews learned about a minister by the name of John Holdeman of Ohio. Then in the fall of 1879, Holdeman came to Manitoba, at which time Brother Toews and the members of the Kleine Gemeinde became acquainted with him. At this time, Minister Holdeman conducted meetings in a number of our villages. Following this series of meetings, Brother Toews went to Kansas in the spring of 1881 with the intention of making a more thorough investigation of the churches organized by Holdeman and others. (Minister J. T. Wiebe, St. Anne, Manitoba, has a report of Brother Toews' findings.)

After the aforesaid investigation, Brother Toews with about one half of the afore-mentioned members of the Kleine Gemeinde followed their convictions and joined the Church of God in Christ (Mennonite). This took place during the winter of 1881-82 at a time when the brethren John Holdeman and Mark Seiler (both of Ohio) preached the Gospel at Steinbach, Blumenort, Klee-feld, and Hochstadt, Manitoba.

At this time about one hundred and twenty-six souls were added to the church. Of this number approximately one hundred were former members of the Kleine Gemeinde, the others being children that were as yet not members of the church. Also at Morris, Manitoba, thirty-six members of the Kleine Gemeinde were united with the Church of God in Christ (Mennonite), at this time.

Steinbach, Manitoba.

#### LARGEST ORDINATION (Continued)

mation for this article, and Ellen—mother of Howard H. Charles, who on July 15, 1943, was ordained to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather and in the same district. They spent their last years on South Broad Street, Lititz. They are buried at Hess. 6-0 9-6

Christian Bucher (1844-1920) married Nancy the second daughter of Bishop Christian Bomberger in 1865, and engaged in farming at Lime Rock where their son Joseph farmed until recently. The family of eleven, ten of whom became of age, were born prior to 1885. Samuel, long a trustee at Hess, and Christian of Erisman were two of them. Feeling that he was not especially qualified for this work, a faithful relative reminded him that "the Creator made the earth out of nothing." He is buried at Erb. 6-4 17-12

Christian Bomberger (1848-1916), second son of Bishop Christian Bomberger II, married Lizzie Hess in 1871 and was engaged in farming on what is now the Hayden Bomberger place near Sun Hill. Here they reared the family of three, which included Hayden. He retired in Lititz and was buried at Erb. 2-1 1-4

Henry G. Snyder (1849-1910) married Anna Bomberger and farmed his entire married life, where his son Amos now lives. He was a very kind agreeable servant of the Lord, rearing a family of seven, all of whom became heads of families within the Church. Jacob and Christ are the other sons. He was buried at the early age of sixty at Hess. 7-0 11-5

Henry Huber Kurtz (1851-1891) was married to Elizabeth Ann (1852-1880), daughter of Henry and Susanna Burkhart, who after a brief conjugal life succumbed to consumption. (She is buried at Groffdale.) He as a widower and his brother Benjamin farmed the Henry K. Kurtz farm, their homestead, along Meadow Run, near Meadow Valley Mennonite Church. (He was a half brother to Mrs. Louis Eberly of Clay and Mrs. Phares Brown of Akron). He had no issue. He attended Church regularly with horse and carriage, being a great lover of the Bible. Being a cripple he acquired a hobby that he might grow old gracefully. He made toys and mementoes which he freely distributed, especially among children, drawing souls to Christ by his thoughtfulness and generosity. He, however, lived only two years longer,

contracting typhoid fever and passing to his reward September 1, 1891. He is buried at Hess. 0-0

H. Reist Landis (1851-1934) who was born near Landis Valley, in the home of Henry and Catharine Reist Landis, taught school for a few years at the home school and then married Marie Bomberger of Warwick Township. They farmed on part of the original Bomberger tract west of Lititz, where Phares Newcomer, a son-in-law, now lives. He attended church at Hess at the time. In 1894 he became the first Sunday school superintendent at Erb, serving for years. They retired in Lititz where Ellen Breneman, a daughter, now of Elida, Ohio, affectionately took care of her parents until they were called to their rest. Two granddaughters are wives of ministers, Mrs. John Hiestand of

Mission Board and served on numerous Deacon Committees for the Board of Bishops. He was a prime mover for a congregation in Lititz and for the calling of Jacob Hershey, ordained in Kansas, to the pulpit. His testimony was sound; his counsel was wise. He is buried at Hess. 5-2 7-16

Reuben Risser (1852-1915) was the son of Bishop Christian, who fifteen years prior was called to the ministry. He was married to Emma Miller and farmed for many years near Wood Corner, south of Weidmanville, where his son Tillman later lived. He served at the singing table of the district with Henry (father of Jacob) Oberholtzer, Henry Eberly of Schoeneck, Jacob Bucher, Peter B. Hess, John Hess and others. For many years he was a trustee at Indiantown. He



*The Hammer Creek Meeting House, where the 1889 ordination was held. This building, four miles north of Lititz, was used as a meeting house from 1819 to 1943 when it was razed to provide a site for the present edifice.*

Marietta and Mrs. Wilmer Eby of Calico. Their remains rest at Erb. 4-1 7-4

Elam Landis (1851-1938) lived on a farm one mile north of Lincoln, for a number of years. He was first married to Magdalena Martin, who died in 1887 leaving six small children, including Mrs. John H. Weaver of Akron. At the time of the ordination his wife was Mary Groff nee Bucher (who died in '24), a daughter of Deacon Jonas Bucher. His third wife was Elizabeth Burkholder nee Oberholtzer. He spent some of his last days with his children and on the Welsh Mountain. He is interred at Metzler. 9-0 36-2

Ephraim Eby (1852-1937), who five years prior was called as Deacon successor of David Brubaker, was married to Amelia Franck, who after a beautiful life passed on, March 14, 1944. They farmed on the Eby place (now Elser Gerhart) midway between Brunnerville and Lititz. Here they reared the family and served the Church, retiring in Lititz in 1910. He was a charter member of the Old Peoples' Home board and also the

was the father of Preacher Abram of Gantz-Hernley. He gave a faithful testimony, for his whole family were reared to love the Lord and the Church. He retired in Weidmanville. He is buried at Hammer Creek. 8-1 10-9

Peter B. Hess (1854-1940), who married Mary Ann Stoner, farmed, lived and died on the same farm, close to the Hess meetinghouse. For years he served as trustee at Hess and was always a pillar in the Church. He quietly but surely gave a very real testimony for his Lord. He is the father of Preacher John S. and grandfather of Preacher Richard B. He is buried at Hess. 2-0 10-0

John H. Brubaker (1855-1933), of Brubaker Valley and brother of Peter, was married to Adaline Erb and farmed between Lincoln and Indiantown before moving along the pike near Weidmanville. Wayne of Metzler is a son. They retired on State Street, Ephrata, and are buried at Hammer Creek. 4-1 3-2

Simon P. Hess (1856-1932), son of Preacher John R., married Sarah Wolf in 1876. They started farming near Wood Corner School, where a Sensenig now

lives. Here Preacher John W. and four others were born. In the spring of '89 they moved on a farm near Millway. In 1895 they came to Akron. In 1900 he became a charter member of the Miller Hess Shoe Company. He served faithfully on the Mission Board as a charter member. He aided in the molding of the Ephrata congregation from the start. He served as trustee and Sunday school superintendent here for years. He is buried in the Wolf Cemetery near Akron.

5-5 12-25

Menno Brubaker (1857-1930) married Catharine Burkholder and lived on the home place in Brubaker Valley, north of the Snively Mills. Here Mrs. Ira Rohrer and Mrs. Jacob Snyder were reared. He served as trustee at Hammer Creek. He retired in Lititz. His remains are at Hammer Creek.

2-0 0-2

Peter Brubaker (1857-1922) married Lizzie Risser of Brummerville and farmed on the southern half of the homestead, northwest of the Hammer Creek Church, where Mrs. Landis Huber, a daughter, now lives. He was always active in church work, especially at Hammer Creek, where he served as trustee for many years and on the building committee for the present edifice. His son-in-law, Landis Huber, faithfully assisted Deacon Ephraim Eby in the Hess-Hammer Creek District from 1924 to 1934. He is buried at Hammer Creek.

1-1 8-1

Henry L. Keener (1857-1936), an uncle of Preacher Henry B. of Virginia, was first married to Susan Risser and lived in Washington County, Maryland, until her death. In 1888 he moved with his two children to the Keener Farm (now owned by Jacob Snyder) northeast of Lititz. He had, the fall before, married Lizzie, the daughter of Benjamin Leaman of this class. Here Preacher Benjamin of Elizabethtown and Preacher Clayton of Mechanic Grove were born. He always was active in the work of the Church at Hess and at Lititz, where he spent his last days. He is buried at Hess. His widow survives.

6-2 18-21

John B. Bucher (1858-1942), a son of Deacon Jonas, was married to Maggie Risser. At the time he farmed where Preacher John S. Hess now lives. When ordained three years later, he farmed south of Clay and later on part of the home place east of Clay. His last days were spent in Ephrata. He served as the first Sunday school superintendent at Hess, Indiantown, and Hammer Creek. He served for fifty years in this large and growing district. He is buried at Hammer Creek.

0-6 0-10

Nathaniel Leaman (1861-1937), son of Benjamin (above), married Annie Risser. They farmed for many years on the Moore Fruit Farm, northeast of Lititz. Here Bishop Christ K. Lehman's wife was born. They were residing in Lititz, however, for many years. In 1897 he was chosen as the first assistant superintendent at Hess. He was ever interested in the Lord's work. He is buried at Hess.

3-9 15-6

Henry Bomberger (1863-1939), another son of Bishop Christian II, was born on the central farm of the Bomberger tract received from the Penns in 1734. (His son Abram now farms here). He married Mary Huber and farmed the home place, until retiring in Lititz. He was interested in the history of the Bomberger family, the community and the Church. He is interred in the Lititz Moravian Cemetery.

0-5 0-5

Christian F. Hess (1867-1940), a son of Preacher Jonas, was 22, the youngest in this class of 22. He was married to Emma Schreiner of Lexington. Choosing the occupation of his fathers, he farmed for years on the acres adjoining the Hess Church. Here he reared his family. He died at Manheim and is buried at Hess.

1-3 1-11

On September 5, 1889, the 150 members of the district and friends from far and near crowded into the old Hammer Creek meetinghouse. Jacob N. Brubacher was in charge. Before them was the class. All but the second oldest were farmers. All were married except one who was a widower. The sermon was preached. Twenty-two books were used. The slip was found in the fourth book, that of Jonas H. Hess (Cousin of Preacher John R. Hess). He was deliberative in his declarations, conservative in his discipline, and direct in his guidance. His favorite expression was "Es was alfurt so" (It was always so).

Only two members of the class were sons of a bishop, two sons of the living ministers, and one a son of a deacon; the two deacons were also in the class, but none of these seven were chosen at that time. Jonas, however, was the grandson of Preacher John Hess who so faithfully served as minister in the same district from 1800 to 1830. Some had no ministerial blood for generations. All were of good Mennonite line families of that District. Only two had ever lived elsewhere.

In this class, each one supported the one ordained until the day of death. Some reared all their children in and for the church; some had a few in the church and in two cases none of their children were in the church. Out of the 131 children reaching maturity, 86, or 65.6%, lived within the Mennonite Church, and 45 were in other or no churches. Out of 407 grandchildren reaching maturity, 207, or 50.8%, were in the Church, and 200 were in other or no churches. A few of the latter were active in other denominations. If in these families there were (without duplication) in the two succeeding generations only 280, or 54.8%, in the Church and 231, or 45.2%, without, what would the remainder of the Church show under the same X ray? If the present membership of Lititz is 200, of Hess-Hammer Creek is 335, and Indiantown is 131, what would it be if all the children's children of our dear brethren of past generations had been saved for the Church which they held dear?

NOTE: The figures following each sketch are four. The first shows the children whether dead or living who reached maturity and who are or have been in the Mennonite Church; the second those outside the Church; the third the grandchildren who grew to maturity and who are in the Church; and the fourth the grandchildren not in the Church.

Lititz, Pa.

## A Comparison of Three Mennonite Novels

CAROLYN BYLER ROTII

I have chosen to compare three Mennonite historical novels which I read for this course rather than to give a critique of one. In this way I hope to be able to point out the unfair way in which the Mennonites are treated in Helen Reimensnyder Martin's *Tillie: A Mennonite Maid* by contrasting it with *The Trail of the Conestoga* by Mabel Dunham, and *Rosanna of the Amish* by J. W. Yoder.

Since I, myself, have descended from an Amish background, just several generations removed, and have lived in Lancaster County for about eight years, I feel that the people written about in these novels are my people. If I am not greatly mistaken, J. W. Yoder is a distant cousin as well as a very good friend of my father.

The setting of *Tillie: A Mennonite Maid* is in Lancaster County and is the story of a young girl who was able with the assistance of her teacher, to rise above herself, her difficulties with her family, and finally, her Mennonite religion, to become an excellent teacher, and later, the wife of a former village teacher, a Harvard graduate.

At the outset, Tillie lives with her father and stepmother and with a host of younger brothers and sisters, and attends the grade school where she is a very fine student. She encounters great opposition in her father who finally succeeds in forcing Tillie to stop school. An important part of the story is the place where Tillie, herself an Evangelical of an Evangelical family, "feels to be plain" and "gives herself up" to become a member of the [Reformed] Mennonite Church.

In the unsympathetic attitude of the author toward the Mennonite customs and people whom she considers as being narrow-minded and quite stupid, it is apparent that she has little understanding of them, and she certainly must not have known very many Mennonite families well to gather the scattered impressions which she leaves the readers of this novel.

Quite a contrast is Mabel Dunham's *The Trail of the Conestoga* in which she gives an exceptional picture of the early immigration of the Mennonite people from Lancaster County to Canada. They went there to find a wilderness and almost within a generation, by their unceasing labors, they changed the landscape so that well-built and substantial homes found themselves surrounded by



cleared land covered with abundant harvests.

This story of Sam Bricker's very interesting efforts and wanderings in order to found a Mennonite colony in Canada is a much more nearly accurate description of the spirit of the early Mennonite people of the eighteenth century. It is such literature as this that makes us more conscious of our background and appreciative of our church fathers. We have known too little the initiative, patience, and self-sacrifice which characterized the struggle of our forefathers in laying the material and political foundations of our country and also of Canada.

J. W. Yoder portrays the Amish in his story, *Rosanna of the Amish*, as being trustworthy, kind, and usually very generous—traits not unknown to our Mennonite friends today. This story of a little orphaned Catholic girl whom an Amish woman took and raised as her own is one which should arouse anyone's interest. Rosanna is the main character from the time she is born until she dies. Woven into this biography are the many customs, beliefs, and ways of living of the Amish.

The purpose of J. W. Yoder in writing this book must have been to give to the world a better understanding of these plain folk, their customs, and ideals. He writes sympathetically and authentically, not exaggeratedly and impressionistically, which could not have been said of Miss Martin.

In spite of the fact that neither of these writers are outstanding literary figures, it is certain that Miss Dunham's and Mr. Yoder's books have done a great deal toward bringing about a better and more tolerant attitude toward the Mennonite and Amish peoples of the country. It is a step in the right direction.

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## The Mennonites and the State

ROSEMARY BEACHY

No part of their creed has subjected the Mennonites to more misrepresentation and misunderstanding than their attitude toward civil authorities. The nonresistant Anabaptists, of whom the Mennonites were the direct successors, went no further, however, in their opposition to the temporal authority than to declare that the true church and temporal powers had nothing in common, and must be entirely separated; not only must state not interfere with the church, but true Christians must be entirely free from participating in civil matters.

The civil authority must exist since it was instituted of God to punish the wicked, but in that work the Christians had no hand. This position they reached from a literal interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount where Christ taught His disciples among other things to love their enemies, and to "swear not at all."

Their position involved opposition to the oath, holding of office, and bearing arms. This brought them into trouble with the civil authorities, and in Europe they seldom got exemption from their civic obligations. This was one of the causes of their emigration. Nor were they granted entire exemptions in America without many years of struggle.

The earliest Anabaptist confession of faith, drawn up at Schleithem in 1527, teaches that the use of the sword is ordained by God to punish the wicked but no Christian can wield it. The Christian cannot take an oath, for Christ who teaches the perfection of law forbids to His people all swearing, whether true or false. This was the position taken by Menno Simons and by all those Anabaptists who later were known as Mennonites. The Anabaptist movement was not confined to Germany and Holland but soon appeared also in England. On the continents several peace sects borrowed a part or all of these doctrines from the earlier Anabaptists or later Mennonites. The most prominent of these, most of whom followed the Mennonites to America early in the eighteenth century, were the Moravians, Schwenkfelders, and the Dunkards.

In England, on the other hand, by the close of the seventeenth century the Quakers stood alone as exponents of non-resistant doctrine. Here at the time when Pennsylvania was settled they had not yet gained any exemption from the oath. It was not until 1689 that any concessions were made to their tender consciences. The Act of Tolerance permitted a solemn promise and declaration to take the place of the oath, allegiance, and abjuration. In 1696 Parliament passed an act providing a modified form of the affirmation, which, however, was still objectionable to the Quakers. This act was renewed frequently in later years, and was given a wider application, but it was not until 1833 that the affirmation was made equal in every respect to the usual oath.

In 1717 the Council, alarmed at the large German immigration that seemed to threaten them, passed an ordinance that all newcomers should take oath of allegiance to His Majesty and his Government. The Mennonites, however, "who cannot for conscience' sake take any oaths" are to be admitted "upon their giving any equivalent assurance in their own manner." From this time on it appears that neither the Mennonites nor Amish had any occasion to petition for further civil exemption, until the time of the Revolution when nonresistant sects found it difficult to maintain a strictly neutral attitude toward the war.

During the early stages of the Revolution each colony mustered its own militia, provided its own arms and ammunition, and regulated its own affairs regardless of what other colonies or Continental Congress were doing. Early in 1775 the Assembly of Pennsylvania recommended that all able-bodied men "associate" for common defense. Those

who would not join were called non-associators. It will be seen that while the Mennonites were excused from military service, it was suggested that they pay for the privilege.

There was much opposition from the various military associations to this lenient policy of the Assembly. Many petitions soon came in complaining that the people who were religiously scrupulous were few compared to those who "made conscience a convenience."

As a result of these petitions the Assembly resolved on November 7, 1775, that all non-associators contribute an equivalent to the time spent by the associators in acquiring military discipline. The Mennonites, fearing that their position might be misunderstood, sent a petition to the Assembly in which they stated that, although they could not take up arms, yet they thought it was their duty to pay tribute. This petition was granted by the Assembly to all non-resistants.

Thus far we have concerned ourselves with the relation of the Mennonites to the Colonial and state governments. The Civil War brought them into direct touch for the first time with national legislation. During the early years of the struggle the national government found it easy to keep armies supplied with men. On March 3, 1863, an act was passed for the enrolling of the national forces, one section of which provided for a draft if necessary. On February 24, 1864, a more stringent Conscription Act was passed. In this act it said that members of religious denominations who could not bear arms, shall when drafted into military service, be considered noncombatants, and shall be assigned to duty in hospitals, or shall pay the sum of \$300 to the Secretary of War to be applied to the benefit of the sick and wounded soldiers.

With a few exceptions the civil authorities in America have been considerate of the Mennonite principles. But before the law of 1864, when once their principles were comprehended, they had always had a hearing. They have many reasons to be thankful for free America. Few nations have granted them such free exercise of their religious faith. Exemption from military service is the last privilege any nation is likely to grant but in America that right is recognized.

But if the civil powers have been considerate of the Mennonite scruples, the Mennonites on the other hand have not been undeserving of those favors. Practically no one ever resorts to a lawsuit, except in defense and for that purpose very seldom; few are ever brought before a criminal or civil court.

Taken all in all, there are few people more industrious, frugal, honest, peaceful, and law-abiding than the Mennonites. Even though their direct influence upon the course of American History may have been slight, yet they have been the very first of modern religious denominations to stand for an ideal that may be distinctly American—complete separation of the church and state. Wellman, Iowa.

